UNITED
NATIONS

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Security Council

Distr.
GENERAL

S/1994/481
21 April 1994

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

LETTER DATED 21 APRIL 1994 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF BANGLADESH TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

In the light of Security Council deliberations on the situation in Rwanda, its implications on the role of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) and the periodic consultations undertaken by you with representatives of troop-contributing countries, I have the honour to inform you of the Government of Bangladesh's views on this subject-matter. I should be grateful if you could bring these views to the attention of the members of the Security Council. A copy of this letter is also being addressed to the Secretary-General.

The situation in Rwanda remains chaotic, dangerous and unpredictable. The mandate of the Mission has been drastically altered by events on the ground. The Arusha peace accord process appears to be derailed. Sustained efforts towards negotiating a cease-fire by United Nations representatives have resulted in little or no progress although efforts continue through the Organization of African Unity (OAU). UNAMIR forces, already depleted by the withdrawal of the Belgian contingent, are short of equipment, weapons and ammunition even to protect themselves. They are being drawn into cross-fires between rival factions that could compromise their neutrality. Indeed, a crucial point for consideration by the Council is whether UNAMIR is serving any useful purpose while exposed to the serious danger of a rapidly deteriorating situation.

It is in this broad context that the Government of Bangladesh has assessed the continued participation of its troops in UNAMIR. Its position is as follows:

(a) Bangladesh has placed its contingent in UNAMIR at the disposal of the Secretary-General for peace-keeping operations. It is our expectation that the Secretary-General will assume full responsibility for ensuring their personal safety and security in discharging their mandated responsibility as peace-keepers;

(b) The assessment of the political and security situation on the ground is the responsibility of the Secretary-General;

(c) Under the present political, military and legal circumstances obtaining in Kigali, the Bangladeshi contingent is exposed to unnecessary risk to its life and security. Bangladeshi troops do not even have adequate weapons to defend themselves, if attacked by any organized groups;

(d) If it is decided by the Secretary-General to keep Bangladeshi troops in Rwanda as a part of UNAMIR, then in our view the following should be done:

(i) Their security and safety may be ensured through political means. The fighting factions in Rwanda should make a clear and dependable political commitment to the United Nations or OAU that they will not harm or attack the UNAMIR forces;

(ii) In the event that the Secretary-General finds the political arrangements in subparagraph (d) (i) above acceptable, then until a new cease-fire can be negotiated, Bangladeshi troops in Rwanda will have to be further reinforced and they must be given the necessary heavy equipment, including artillery and armoured personnel carriers (APCs) to defend themselves, if attacked;

(e) If in the assessment of the Secretary-General, the security and political situation in Rwanda would not permit the safe stay of UNAMIR elements in Rwanda, then the Bangladeshi contingent may be relocated to a nearby country. This would enable the Bangladeshi contingent to return to Rwanda as soon as a new peace accord is signed.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a Security Council document.

(Signed) Reaz RAHMAN
Permanent Representative